

**International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste Reduction organised
by The University of Mauritius on 29 September 2022 at 09:00hrs**

Dr. Claude Audrey, Chancellor, University of Mauritius

Professor Sobhee, Vice Chancellor of the University of Mauritius

The Representative of the UN Resident Coordinator Office

Associate Professors and Lecturers

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I feel greatly honoured by the privilege that the University extended to me in inviting me to this activity to celebrate the **International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste Reduction**, which is held today the 29 September 2022.

Globally, around one-third of all food produced in the world is lost or wasted between farm and fork, while an estimated 18 per cent of total global food production is wasted (11 per cent in households, 5 per cent in the food service and 2 per cent in retail). This is quite paradoxical in an age where almost a billion people go hungry.

Across the African continent, an estimated 100 million people faced catastrophic levels of food insecurity in 2020

In a continent where so many people are starving and many more, especially children and women, are undernourished, it is unconceivable to lose and waste food on this scale.

Reducing food loss and waste could be one of the key strategies for Africa, and the world, to achieve a sustainable food future.

The causes of food waste or loss are numerous and occur throughout the food system during production, processing, distribution, retail and food service sales, and consumption.

Ladies and gentlemen

Food wastage of any kind or scale whatsoever is unacceptable, and as a nation, we need to ensure that our resources are utilised efficiently towards optimum food production.

Food loss and waste undermine the sustainability of our food systems. When food is lost or wasted, all the resources that were used to produce this food -, including water, land, energy, labour and capital - go to waste. In addition, the disposal of food loss and waste in landfills, leads to greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change. Food loss and waste can also negatively impact food security and food availability, and contribute to increasing the cost of food.

Within the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12) on Responsible Consumption and Production sets out a target (12.3); “**by 2030 halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer**

level, and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses”.

The reduction of food losses and waste, will positively affect many other SDGs, along with the SDG 12. By reducing food loss and waste, it will be possible to ensure food security and access to food, increase productivity and economic growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as pressure on land and water resources.

Considering the increasing world population, the food system, including the supply chain, needs to be redesigned to ensure food security; and the causes of food losses and waste should be determined as soon as possible and actions should be taken to reduce and prevent it.

To achieve this, stakeholders such as international organisations, governments, producers, suppliers, distributors, businesses, consumers, non-governmental organisations and academia should work together to find innovative solutions.

There are many ways to tackle this huge problem, but one of the most effective is to embrace the principles of circularity and zero waste at all levels of the food value chain. This thinking goes beyond the conventional definition of food loss and waste, in which food by-products such as bones, peels and seeds are not considered part of food. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

As we look out over the horizon, we know demand for food is driven by both population growth and income growth. We know that we are increasingly dependent on only a few food-producing countries.

We know agriculture is limited by the inevitable scarcity of land, water access, and poor soil quality. And we also know the devastating impacts of climate change on yields and the spread of diseases affecting crops and livestock.

We are aware that the current food systems is not just unsustainable, it is also fragile, dependent on global trade in monoculture crops like grain fertilisers, and fossil energy, which are sourced from a few countries, This can create supply chain obstacles if these countries are hit by natural calamities or other disruptions like war. One vivid example of such disruption, is the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

I am sure the other speakers will during their speeches talk on the relationship between food security and food waste, how to make our agricultural systems more resilient, use of technological advances (e.g., precision agriculture) to promote agriculture production, using regenerative agriculture techniques among others.

But if we still view the food waste and loss as orphan or the poor child of our food production system the battle to feed the world and alleviate hunger will take a long time.

According to the UN, Global hunger has been on the rise since 2015, reversing years of progress. Reducing food losses and waste – which have adverse social, economic and environmental impacts – is crucial to counter this challenge.

Countries across all regions and income groups register high levels of food losses and waste, necessitating action across the value chain, from harvesting to consumption.

A number of countries, namely Italy and France have enacted relevant legislations to tackle the issue of food loss and food waste.

Mauritius too is taking some good actions. Recently the Ministry of Health has come up with new legislation on date marking to prevent wastage due to expiry dates. Several organisations are active in food donations; hotels and the retail sector are taking good measures to combat food waste.

Reducing food loss and waste can bring about many benefits: more food available for the most vulnerable; reduced greenhouse gas emissions; less pressure on land and water resources; and increased productivity and economic growth. All this will bring about efficient use of resources, in a world where the natural resources, such as soil, is being degraded at alarming rate

Ladies and gentlemen

To conclude, I wish to congratulate the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Mauritius for their initiatives to sensitise our Nation on this issue of food waste. I wish them all plenty of success in their efforts and I am sure it will contribute to reduce our food waste imprint.

I am pleased to convey to you all the best wishes and support of my office on all your initiatives to reduce food loss and waste in the agriculture food value chain.

Thank You for your kind attention.